STATE & PRIVATE FORESTRY
FOREST HEALTH PROTECTION
SOUTH SIERRA SHARED SERVICE AREA

Report No. SS12-04

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To: Susan Skalski, Forest Supervisor, Stanislaus National Forest
Margaret Dowd, District Ranger, Stanislaus National Forest

Subject: **Monotti Plantation Thinning (Prop 84 funding proposal)**
Groveland Ranger District, Stanislaus National Forest

On October 7, 2011, Beverly M. Bulaon (Forest Health Protection Entomologist) visited the Monotti Urban Fuels and Plantation Thinning Project accompanied by Ken Romberger, District Silviculturist. Portions of the project are being submitted for 2012 Proposition 84 funding (California Department of Water Resources). Proposed plantations acres are located in the eastern portion of the Monotti project; three units (32001A, 320149, and 320130) in particular were evaluated for assessment. The purpose of the visit was to review forest health conditions within the plantations, and discuss effects of proposed treatments.

Background

The proposed acres on the Monotti Project (Groveland Ranger District) is located along Greeley Hill Road (Tuolumne county, CA; Township 2 South, Range 17 East, Sections 22 and 23). The small community of Greeley Hill is located about one mile east of the plantations; small scatterings of private landowners are ¼ mile away. The entire project is within a DFPZ (defensive fire protection zone) posing a high wildfire threat to nearby homeowners. Topography is gentle slopes on north and south faces.

The district proposes to thin 654 acres of ponderosa pine plantation in FY2012. Plantations were established in 1987 after the Complex fires decimated most forested areas of the district. Trees range in size from 6-12 inches, average 7 inches diameter at breast height. Trees were originally planted at 8 x 8 spacing, with no treatment since inception. Most stands are now with naturally seeded incense cedars and more pine, but predominantly still ponderosa. Stands are currently overstocked with over 650 trees per acre. Assessment of current conditions suggests high wildfire potential and moderate pest damage risk. Trees are already showing signs of growth slowdown and lower needle retention. Proposed treatments would be variations of hand-thinning and piling, or biomass removal by mechanical thinning.

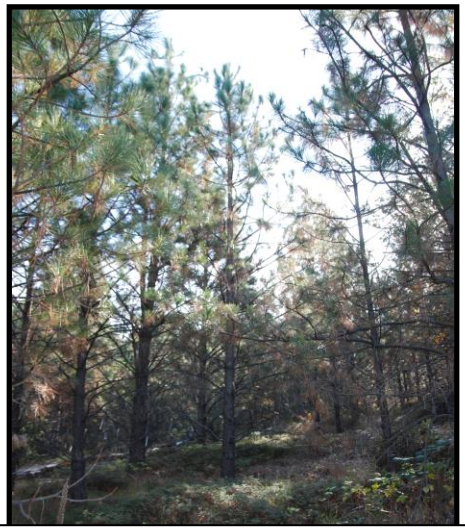

Figure 1. Representative stand of planted ponderosa pines on Monotti project, Groveland Ranger District.

Discussion

Thinning over half of original basal area within these plantations would significantly reduce risk of catastrophic wildfire and potential for pest damage. Reducing inter-tree competition for resources, space, and light should improve vigor and resistance for residual trees against pests. Biomass that is recycled and reused will contribute to sustaining forest products while assisting communities with alternative energy sources.

Monotti project is a collaboration of over 30 participating groups: local, federal, and state. All collaborators have provided input, support, and stewardship for the success of this project. Additional funding from Prop 84 would allow for full completion, contributing beyond just the local community. Protection of watershed and associated forested resources serves the greater public too as clean water, carbon storage, and future forests.

Please contact us with any additional questions or concerns.

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